

Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Christmas Eve, Year A  
December 24, 2025



**Pastor** Melissa Pagel

**Musician:** Greg Pagel

**Worship Assistants**

**Assisting Minister:** Roland Christian

**Reader:** Peggy Hansen

**Altar Guild:** Peggy Hansen

**Communion Assistant:** Linda Wery

**Ushers:** Tim & Nancy Moran, Carol Wehunt, & Julie Juranitch

**Video Tech:** Cindy Michalski

---

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*    **GATHERING**

**WELCOME**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

On this holy night, we come,  
**dazzled and awe-struck,**  
**ready to sing alongside the angels.**

On this holy night, we come,  
**eager and hopeful,**  
**ready to journey alongside the shepherds.**

On this holy night, we come,  
**quietly and tenderly,**  
**ready to worship alongside Mary.**

On this holy night, we come,  
**singing, trusting, believing, proclaiming:**  
**good news is louder than fear.**

Let us worship our good news, God with us.

**GATHERING SONG** *O Come, All Ye Faithful* **Cranberry 283**

**O come, all ye faithful,**  
**joyful and triumphant!**  
**O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;**  
**come and behold him,**  
**born the king of angels:**

***Refrain***

**O come, let us adore him,**  
**O come, let us adore him,**  
**O come, let us adore him,**  
**Christ the Lord!**

**The highest, most holy,**  
**light of light eternal,**  
**born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;**  
**Son of the Father**  
**now in flesh appearing! *Refrain***

**Sing, choirs of angels,**  
**sing in exultation,**  
**sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!**  
**Glory to God**  
**in the highest: *Refrain***

**CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS**

Family of faith, on the night of Jesus' birth,  
a crowd of angels appeared before a group of rag-tag shepherds  
to tell them the good news.

The angels *could* have gone to Herod's house.

The angels *could* have sung in the city square.  
The angels *could* have found the most important,  
faithful, and powerful to share the good news,  
but instead they told a group of low-status shepherds.  
The angels' message was clear:  
this is *good* news of *great* joy for all people.  
The good news of this night is for you too—no matter who you  
are, what you've done or left undone. The angels are singing for you.  
So join me in the Prayer of Confession.  
Join me in drawing closer to the God  
who has already drawn close to us.

Let us pray, God of angel choruses,  
**you hang the stars in the sky,  
but we do not see them.**  
**You fill the night with angelic song,  
but we do not hear it.**  
**You send shepherds to tell the good news,  
but we do not believe them.**  
**You bring love into the world,  
but we do not seek it.**  
**Quiet the fear in us that works to rationalize,  
minimize, and distract  
from the good news you put forth into the world.**  
**Tune our hearts back to your song.**  
**With hope we pray, Amen.**

Family of faith, when the angels arrived in the field that night,  
the shepherds were afraid. But the angels said:

**“Do not be afraid.**  
**I am bringing you good news of great joy for *all* people.”**

This good news is:  
**love freely given, grace radically extended,  
welcome always offered,  
belonging never restricted.**

Friends, we are seen, loved, welcomed, forgiven,  
called, and sent to serve.

Thanks be to God for a love like that. **Amen.**

## HYMN OF PRAISE

*O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Cranberry 279

O little town of Bethlehem,  
how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
the silent stars go by;  
yet in thy dark streets shineth  
the everlasting light.  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary,  
and, gathered all above  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wond'ring love.  
O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the king,  
and peace to all the earth!

How silently, how silently  
the wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
the blessings of his heav'n.  
No ear may hear his coming;  
but, in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him, still  
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem,  
descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin, and enter in,  
be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
the great glad tidings tell;  
oh, come to us, abide with us,  
our Lord Immanuel!

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

On this most blessed and holy night,  
the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

God of yesterday, today and tomorrow,  
**we long to catch a glimpse of your Spirit.**  
**We cup our ears to hear the sound of the angel chorus.**  
**We turn our eyes toward the sky to see if we can find your star.**  
**We lean forward in our seat to see**  
**if we can feel your presence in our midst.**  
**We long to catch a glimpse of your Spirit, O God.**  
**So on this quiet night, on this holy night, on this joyful night,**  
**reveal yourself to us once more.**  
**Speak to us through the music and the children.**  
**Speak to us through starlight and candlelight.**  
**Speak to us through these ancient words once again.**  
**We long to catch a glimpse of you. Amen.**

---

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

**WORD**

## **HYMN OF LIGHT    Love Has Come    Cranberry 292 vs 1-2**

**Love has come—a light in the darkness!**  
**Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.**  
**See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;**  
**hear how their song of joy arises:**  
**Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!**  
**Love! Love! Glory to God on high.**

**Love is born! Come, share in the wonder.**  
**Love is God now asleep in the hay.**  
**See the glow in the eyes of his mother;**  
**what is the name her heart is saying?**  
**Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers;**  
**Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.**

## **LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE**

In a fearful world, where do you see the presence of God?

**We see God's fingerprints all around us. We see God in the beauty of the stars. We see God in the love of this community. We see God in the dreams we hold for a better world.**

You are right. Even in a fearful world, God is here. God is all around us.

On this holy night, we light the Christ Candle as a reminder of this good news. May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, God's love is all around us.

The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness will not overcome it.

**Thanks be to God for a love like that! Amen.**

## **HYMN OF LIGHT**

*Love Has Come*      **Cranberry 292 vs 3**

**Love has come and never will leave us!  
Love is life everlasting and free.  
Love is Jesus within and among us.  
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.  
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas;  
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!**

## **FIRST READING:** Isaiah 9:2-7

<sup>2</sup>The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.

<sup>3</sup>You have multiplied exultation;  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden  
and the bar across their shoulders,

the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
<sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.  
<sup>6</sup> For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders,  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
<sup>7</sup> Great will be his authority,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onward and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Word of God, Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*Angels We Have Heard on High*      **Cranberry 289 vs 1**

**Angels we have heard on high,  
sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply,  
echoing their joyous strains.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo;  
gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**GOSPEL:** Luke 2:1-20

The holy gospel according to Luke. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup> In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there,

the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

<sup>8</sup> Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, <sup>19</sup> and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Angels We Have Heard on High* **Cranberry 289 vs 2**

**Come to Bethlehem and see  
him whose birth the angels sing;  
come, adore on bended knee  
Christ the Lord, the newborn king.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo;  
gloria in excelsis Deo.**

**SERMON**

**Pastor Melissa Pagel**

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

**Cranberry 270 1, 3**



Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn king;  
peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled."  
Joyful, all you nations, rise;  
join the triumph of the skies;  
with angelic hosts proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn king!"

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace!  
Hail the Sun of righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
ris'n with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
born that we no more may die,  
born to raise each child of earth,  
born to give us second birth.

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn king!"

#### AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We have seen a sky without stars.  
We have seen the longest night,  
and still we believe.  
We believe in a with-us God.  
We believe in the hope of tomorrow.  
We believe that good news is louder than fear.  
We believe this good news is for all people.  
So even when our knees shake,  
even when our voice trembles,  
even when fear is all around us,  
we will hold onto that good news.  
We will reach for each other.  
We will look for God in our midst.  
We will sing songs of joy.  
We will proclaim:  
Unto us, love is born.

**We have seen the longest night,  
and we have seen unimaginable love.  
So still, we believe. Amen.**

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need.

Gathering God, you bring your people from every corner of the earth together before the manger that you have made a throne. Unite the church in love as we rejoice in the news of your coming. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creating God, you brought forth the earth and all that is in it. Join our voices with the roaring seas, the exulting fields, and the trees of the forest singing for joy on this holy night.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Transforming God, the world trembles amid violence and war. Empower our hands, feet, and hearts with your Spirit to shatter the rod of the oppressor and turn swords into plowshares.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Shepherding God, you lead us to your love in the face of our neighbor. Send us into the world to find your Word made flesh in one another, especially those who are sick or struggling.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Nurturing God, you dwell with us in humble places. Sustain housing and clothing ministries in this community, that all find shelter and warmth. We pray especially for youth seeking safety and care.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

For what else do the people of God pray?

*Spoken and silent prayers welcome.*

Abiding God, you remain at the side of all the departed. Grant all who mourn hope in the resurrection and peace in Christ Jesus.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior.  
**Amen.**

## **PEACE**

Glory to God in the highest, **and peace to God's people on earth.**

---

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

**MEAL**

## **OFFERING**

### **OFFERING PRAYER**

Let us pray, God of glory,

**great are your wonders among us and many are the blessings you bestow.**

**Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world, that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace, through Christ our Savior. Amen.**

## **THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

The Lord is with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We give you thanks and praise, O God,

for the promise of your saving love to all.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

The chains of the oppressed are broken.

For a child has been born for us -

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Glory to God in the highest,

**and peace to all people on earth.**

... Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to all people on earth. Amen.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

### COMMUNION HYMN      *What Child is This*      Cranberry 296

**What child is this, who, laid to rest,  
on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet  
while shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the king,  
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
haste, haste to bring him laud,  
the babe, the son of Mary!**

**Why lies he in such mean estate  
where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here  
the silent Word is pleading.  
Nails, spear shall pierce him through,**

the cross be borne for me, for you;  
hail, hail the Word made flesh,  
the babe, the son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
come, peasant, king, to own him.  
The King of kings salvation brings;  
let loving hearts enthrone him.  
Raise, raise the song on high,  
the virgin sings her lullaby;  
joy, joy, for Christ is born,  
the babe, the son of Mary!

#### **POST COMMUNION PRAYER**

Let us pray, Loving God,  
**In a world racked with fear,  
you gather us together.  
You set the table.  
You meet us here.  
You nourish our bodies  
as you nourish our spirits.  
You remind us that this is a joyful feast,  
and that fear cannot win every time.  
So with renewed courage,  
with renewed hope,  
with renewed conviction,  
send us out into the world.  
Help us to feed others as you have fed us.  
With gratitude we pray, Amen.**

---

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

**SENDING**

*Please rise in body or in spirit.*

## **CANDLE LIGHTING**

The God who said, "Let there be light,"  
has caused light to shine in our hearts today.  
That light is the glory of God,  
reflected in the face of Jesus Christ.  
As we light our candles, let them be a sea of light  
lit from the one light of Christ.  
Let all who are gathered  
here reflect Christ's light and love in the world.

*Please remember to dip the unlit candle to the lit candle.*

*Silent Night, Holy Night!*

**Cranberry 281**

**Silent night, holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright  
round yon virgin mother and child.  
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace,  
sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight;  
glories stream from heaven afar,  
heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia!  
Christ, the Savior, is born!  
Christ, the Savior, is born!**

**Silent night, holy night!  
Son of God, love's pure light  
radiant beams from your holy face,  
with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at your birth,  
Jesus, Lord, at your birth.**

## **BLESSING**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.  
**Those who dwell in a land of deep darkness on them has light shined.**

For unto us a child is born,

**to us a Son is given!**

And the government will be upon his shoulders,

**and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor,**

Mighty God,

**Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

And the blessing of almighty God,

Creator, the ☩ Word made flesh, and the Holy Spirit,

be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

**SENDING SONG**

*Joy to the World*    **Cranberry 267**

**Joy to the world, the Lord is come!**

**Let earth receive her king;**

**let ev'ry heart prepare him room**

**and heav'n and nature sing,**

**and heav'n and nature sing,**

**and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.**

**Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!**

**Let all their songs employ,**

**while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains**

**repeat the sounding joy,**

**repeat the sounding joy,**

**repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**No more let sin and sorrow grow**

**nor thorns infest the ground;**

**he comes to make his blessings flow**

**far as the curse is found,**

**far as the curse is found,**

**far as, far as the curse is found.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace**

**and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.**

**DISMISSAL**

Glory to God in the highest!

**And peace to God's people on earth!**

Go in joy. Embody God's redeeming grace.

**Thanks be to God.**

---

**Copyright to be added:**

Augsburg Fortress Liturgies License #22041

CCLI License #2623795 One License #734715-A

Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC |  
sanctifiedart.org.

Great Thanksgiving adapted from *Connections: Worship Companion YrC Vol1* edited  
by David Gambell.